Listing of the Claims

The following listing of the claims replaces all prior versions of the claims.

1. (currently amended) A golf tee, comprising:

an elongate shaft having opposed upper and lower ends, the lower end configured to be inserted into an underlying surface; and

a support cup that is configured to support a golf ball from beneath, the support cup merging with the shaft, the support cup having a base portion having a concave upper surface and further including at least three arcuate support prongs projecting upwardly from the base portion, the support prongs defining a discontinuous annulus about the periphery of the support cup; wherein the base portion upper surface has a radius of curvature of less than 0.6 inch, such that a golf ball resting on the support prongs does not contact the base portion upper surface.

2. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 1, wherein each of the support prongs has a secant length that is greater than a dimple on a golf ball.

3. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 2, wherein each of the support prongs has a secant length of at least 0.170 inch.

4. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 3, wherein each of the support prongs has a secant length of less than 0.200 inch.

5. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 1, wherein each of the support prongs has a convex contact surface adapted to contact a golf ball.

6. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 1, wherein the at least three support prongs comprises four support prongs.

7. (canceled).

8. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 1, wherein the elongate shaft includes flutes that resist twisting of the tee when the tee is inserted into the ground.

9. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 1, wherein the elongate shaft includes a pointed tip at its lower end and a main body, the main body decreasing in diameter with increasing distance from the support cup.

10. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 9, wherein in side view the main body of the elongate shaft forms a taper angle of between about 0.75 and 1.0 degrees over a length of between about 2.7 and 3.0 inches.

11. (canceled).

12. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 1 formed of a biodegradable material.

13. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 11 formed of a biocompostable material.

14. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 11, wherein the biodegradable material comprises polylactic acid.

15. (original) A golf tee, comprising:

an elongate shaft having opposed upper and lower ends, the lower end configured to be inserted into an underlying surface; and

a support cup that is configured to support a golf ball from beneath, the support cup merging with the shaft, the support cup having a base portion and further including at least three arcuate support prongs projecting upwardly from the base portion, each of the support prongs having a convex contact surface and being of a secant length that is greater than that of a dimple of a golf ball.

16. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 15, wherein the secant length of the support prongs is at least 0.170 inches.

17. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 16, wherein the secant length of the support prongs is between about 0.170 and 0.200 inch.

18. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 15, wherein the convex contact surfaces of the support prongs have a radius of curvature of less than 0.060 inches.

19. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 18, wherein the convex contact surfaces of the support prongs have a radius of curvature of between about 0.040 and 0.060 inches.

20. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 15, wherein the at least three support prongs comprises four support prongs.

21. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 15, wherein the base portion upper surface has a radius of curvature of less than 0.600 inch, such that a golf ball resting on the support prongs does not contact the base portion upper surface.

22. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 15, wherein the elongate shaft includes flutes that resist twisting of the tee when the tee is inserted into the ground.

23. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 15, wherein the elongate shaft includes a pointed tip at its lower end and a main body, the main body decreasing in diameter with increasing distance from the support cup.

24. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 23, wherein in side view the main body of the elongate shaft forms a taper angle of between about 0.75 and 1.5 degrees over a length of between about 2.7 and 3.0 inches.

25. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 15 formed of a biodegradable material.

26. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 25 formed of a biocompostable material.

27. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 15, wherein the base portion further comprises a generally concave upper surface

28. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 25, wherein the biodegradable material comprises polylactic acid.

29. (original) A golf tee, comprising:

an elongate shaft having opposed upper and lower ends, the lower end configured to be inserted into an underlying surface; and

a support cup that is configured to support a golf ball from beneath, the support cup merging with the shaft, the support cup having a base portion and further including at least three arcuate support prongs projecting upwardly from the base portion, the support prongs defining a discontinuous annulus about the periphery of the support cup, each of the support prongs having a convex contact surface and being of a secant length that is greater than that of a dimple of a golf ball.

30. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 29, wherein the secant length of the support prongs is at least 0.170 inches.

31. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 29, wherein the secant length of the support prongs is between about 0.170 and 0.200 inches.

32. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 29, wherein the convex contact surfaces of the support prongs have a radius of curvature of less than 0.060 inch.

33. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 32, wherein the convex contact surfaces of the support prongs have a radius of curvature of between about 0.040 and 0.060 inch.

34. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 29, wherein the at least three support prongs comprises four support prongs.

35. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 29, wherein the base portion upper surface has a radius of curvature of less than 0.6 inch, such that a golf ball resting on the support prongs does not contact the base portion upper surface.

36. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 29, wherein the elongate shaft includes flutes that resist twisting of the tee when the tee is inserted into the ground.

37. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 29, wherein the elongate shaft includes a pointed tip at its lower end and a main body, the main body decreasing in diameter with increasing distance from the support cup.

38. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 37, wherein in side view the main body of the elongate shaft forms a taper angle of between about 0.75 and 1.5 degrees over a length of between about 2.7 and 3.0 inches.

39. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 29 formed of a biodegradable material.

40. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 39 formed of a biocompostable material.

41. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 39, wherein the biodegradable material comprises polylactic acid.

42. (original) The golf tee defined in Claim 29, wherein the base portion further comprises a generally concave upper surface

43. (original) A golf tee, comprising:

an elongate shaft having opposed upper and lower ends, the lower end configured to be inserted into an underlying surface; and

a support cup that is configured to support a golf ball from beneath, the support cup merging with the shaft, the support cup having a base portion and further including at least three arcuate support prongs projecting upwardly from the base portion, each of the support prongs having a convex contact surface and being of a secant length such that the total contact area between the contact surfaces and a golf ball resting on the contact surfaces is between about 0.0036 and0.0045 in^2.